class/group spaces user manual for teachers

finalsite
web software & services for schools

Introduction

The summer 2011 release includes a series of changes to Group Spaces that significantly enhance the appearance, functionality and usability. Group Space pages now have a tab-oriented layout, with easy access to the various features. Below the tabs, admins can configure a number of different elements in order to customize the layout and determine what information is displayed to members.

This document is a reference for Group Admins, providing details on navigating the new Group Spaces and setting up the various Group Spaces elements.

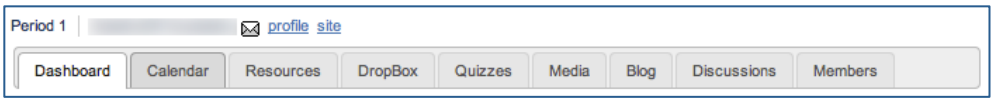
Group admins – which is to say, teachers, can customize the various components of their individual class pages. Assignments and in-class events can be added to the calendar and showcased on the home page. Videos, MP3s and images can be grouped into playlists and albums for sharing with class members. Documents and other resources can be consolidated into one central location, with protected access for all class members. There are discussion board and blog resources available, and teachers can even create self-grading quizzes for students to take at any time.

Tab-based layout

New feature: Tabs

The tabbed layout brings together all of the various components of the Group Space:

- Dashboard
- Calendar
- Resources
- DropBox
- Quizzes
- Media
- Blog
- Discussions
- Members



Dashboard

The Dashboard is the main landing page for the Group Space, and it's the first thing group members will see when they click over to a group from a portal page. The Dashboard displays relevant information from several sections of the Group space. Similar to a Portal page, the Dashboard is broken up into a series

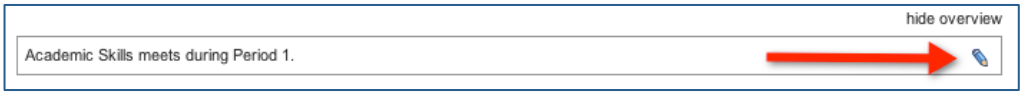
of "elements," arranged into two columns. Unlike a Portal page, **Dashboard elements cannot be rearranged or removed**.

Some Dashboard elements are listed as "optional" – you can keep these elements from being displayed simply by leaving them alone. Any "optional" element that is not configured or that contains no content will be hidden from Group members. Note that as a Group admin, **you will always see all elements**, regardless of whether or not they have been configured; it is only Group members or guests (i.e., Students and Parents) who cannot view empty elements.

Dashboard elements include:

1.1. **Overview**

A small content area spanning both columns on the page, the Overview is meant to contain a short description of the Group, or important information that pertains to Group members. Click on the blue pencil icon to edit the Overview message.



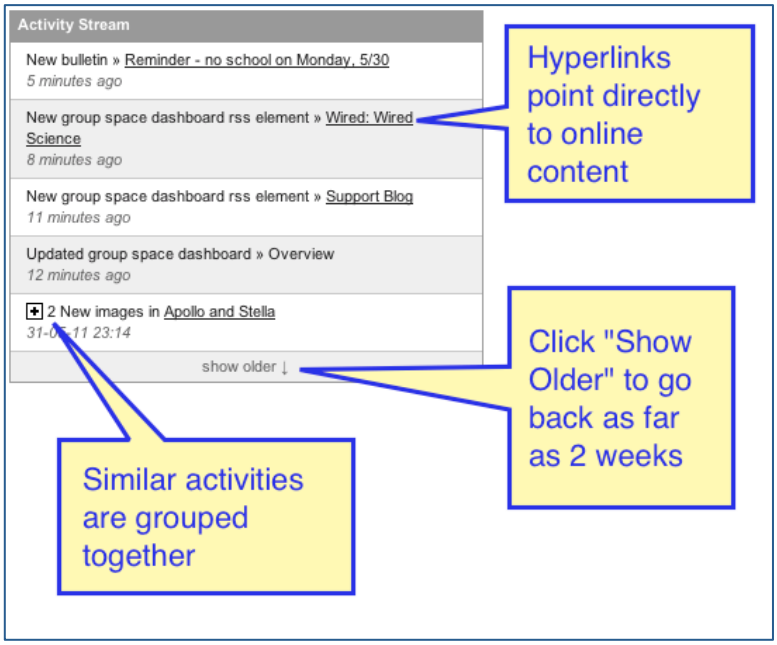
Note that the Overview is not marked as "optional," but it will still disappear when content is not entered. Individual users can click the "hide overview" link to collapse the Overview box so that it doesn't take up space on their Dashboard page if they don't need to read it. As a result, it's good practice to not use the Overview for essential content that may change, as you may not be able to ensure that all students read the newest content.

Left Column

1.2. **Recent Activity**

The Activity Stream element displays a continuous record of edits, uploads, blog/forum posts and other changes made to a Group Space. Recent activity content cannot be edited, filtered or sorted; all edits to Group Space elements will be displayed in the Activity Stream.

NOTE: The new Activity Stream element is available both for Portal pages and for Group Spaces. On a Portal page, the Activity Stream will display updates for ALL of the Groups you belong to/have permission to view. When viewing an individual Group Space, the Activity Stream there will only display events pertaining to that specific Group.


Activity Stream
New bulletin » Reminder - no school on Monday, 5/30
5 minutes ago
New group space dashboard rss element » Wired: Wired Science
8 minutes ago
New group space dashboard rss element » Support Blog
11 minutes ago
Updated group space dashboard » Overview
12 minutes ago
2 New images in Apollo and Stella
31-05-11 23:14
show older ↓
Hyperlinks point directly to online content
Click "Show Older" to go back as far as 2 weeks
Similar activities are grouped together

Parents will see updates and edits in their Activity Stream elements for any Groups they belong to; they will also have access to view recent activities for their children's Groups. Clicking the child's name in the dropdown menu above the Activity Stream will expand the element to display recent updates for the appropriate Group(s) the child belongs to.

1.3. **Media**

The Media element allows Group Admins to display content from a folder in Multimedia Manager directly on the class Dashboard page. Use the "settings" link to select which folder from Multimedia Manager will be displayed. The properties for each individual content folder can be set in Multimedia Manager.

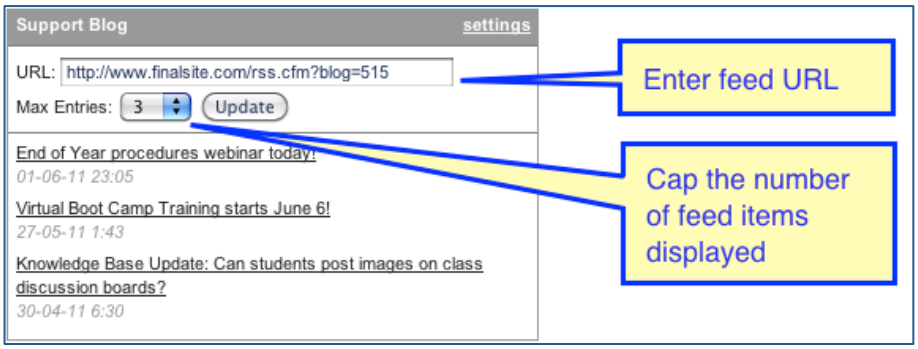
Media
manage media | settings
Jump to Multimedia Manager
Select content for display in this element
Jump to "Media" tab
full media player >

Click the "manage media" link to open Multimedia Manager and edit the Channel/Folder properties there.

Beneath the media display area, the "full media player" link will jump the user directly to the "Media" tab of the Group Space. There, users will see the full Multimedia Manager display, with controls for controlling the slideshow, Video Playlist or MP3 Playlist currently displayed. See "6. Media" in this document for more details about the Media tab.

1.4. RSS Feed (optional)

Click the "settings" link to enter the URL of an RSS feed. Any content posted to the RSS feed will be displayed in the element window. You can use the dropdown menu under "settings" to cap the number of past items displayed at a time.



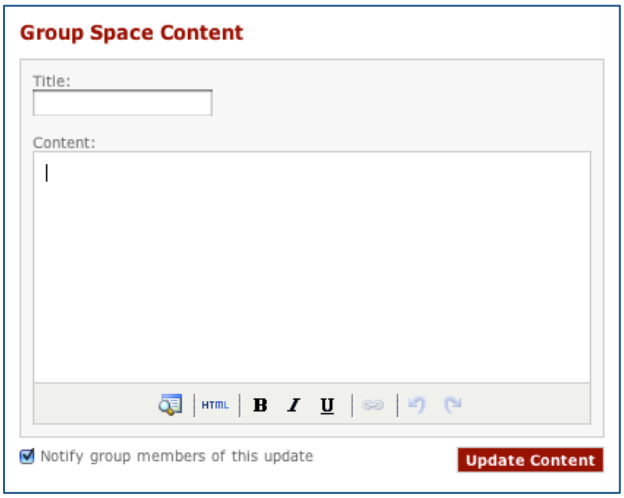
For more information about RSS feeds, the finalsite Knowledge Base article "What do I do with an RSS feed?" is a good place to start. You can use an RSS feed from any site in the RSS element, not just one from a finalsite blog or

page.

As this is an "optional" element, it will not be visible to Group Members or Guests if there is no RSS feed URL entered into the element settings.

1.5. **Content (optional)**

The content element provides Group Admins with a simple content entry field. The popup editor and HTML editors are available for creating formatted text and adding images.



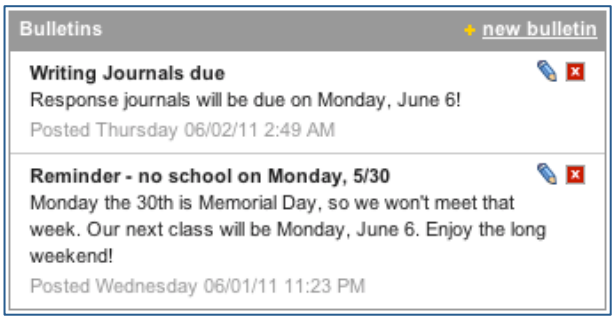
Uncheck the "Notify group members of this update" checkbox to prevent edits to this element from appearing in the Activity Stream element.

As this is an "optional" element, it will not be visible to Group Members or Guests if there is no content entered.

Right Column

1.6. **Bulletins**

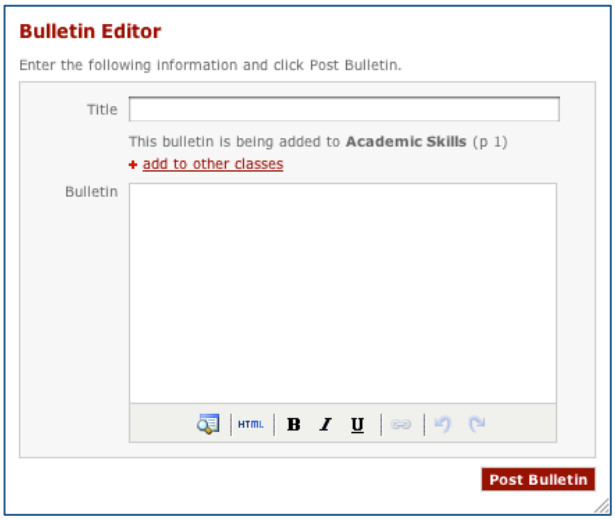
Bulletins are similar to standard Content elements, but are intended more for short, timely notices that are less permanent. Items added to a bulletin element will stack in a list; the 3 most recent bulletins will be displayed, along with the date and time that they were created. After a bulletin has been created, it can be edited by clicking the associated blue pencil icon.


Bulletins
+ new bulletin
Writing Journals due
Response journals will be due on Monday, June 6!
Posted Thursday 06/02/11 2:49 AM
Reminder - no school on Monday, 5/30
Monday the 30th is Memorial Day, so we won't meet that week. Our next class will be Monday, June 6. Enjoy the long weekend!
Posted Wednesday 06/01/11 11:23 PM

Users who are Administrators of more than one Group have the option of posting bulletins to any or all of their Groups at once when the bulletin is created. Click the "+add to other classes" button when composing a new

bulletin, and check off each Group you would like to display the content.

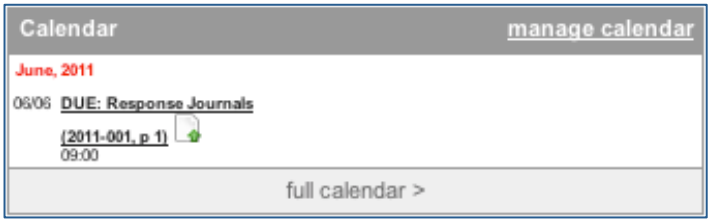
Note: when sharing bulletins to another class, the shared versions are *clones* of the original bulletin; that is, they are duplicate copies that are created separately and associated with a new class. Future edits to cloned bulletin events will NOT update the original bulletin that was used to create the clone.



1.7. **Calendar**

The Calendar element will appear on a Group Space page whenever there is an event coming up on that Group's calendar. Calendar events will appear as links in a stacked list; each individual entry can be clicked to bring the user directly to the full details of the item.

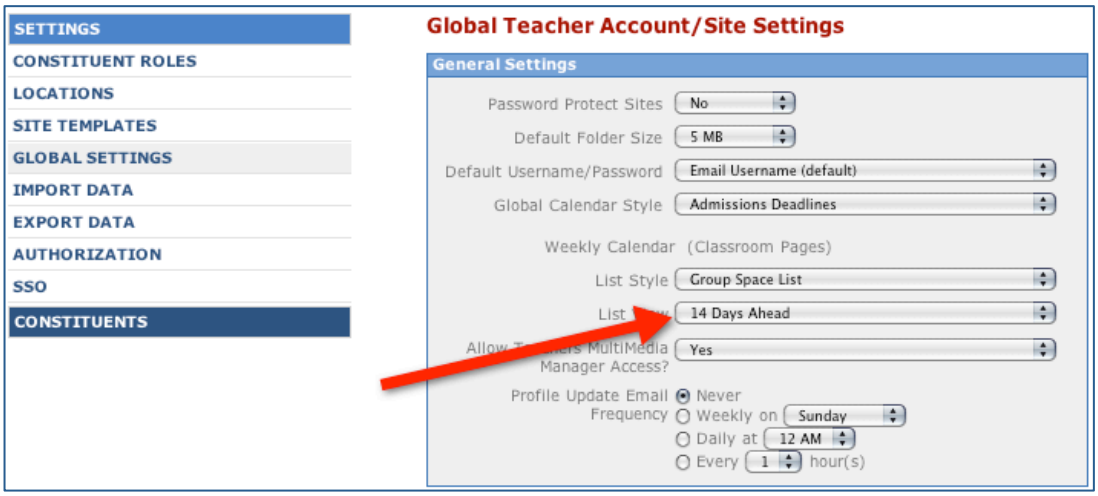
If the Calendar event is an assignment with an associated DropBox, the entry will also display a link to that DropBox.



Click the "manage calendar" link to open up Calendar Manager and edit Calendar entries. The "Full Calendar" link across the bottom of the element will jump users directly to the Calendar tab (see below).

To control the number of days ahead/behind that are displayed in the Calendar element, site administrators can adjust the settings in Constituent

Manager > Settings > Global Settings. Note that this will affect ALL Group Space calendars.

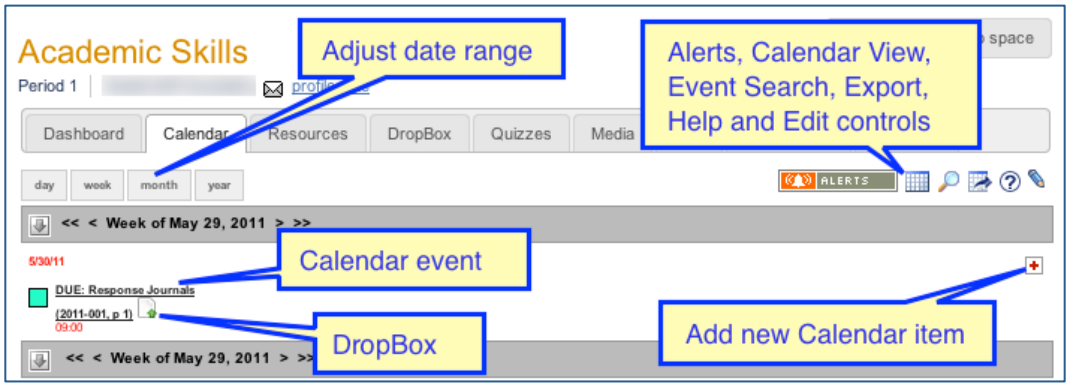


1.8. **RSS Feed (optional)**
See 1.5: RSS Feed (optional)

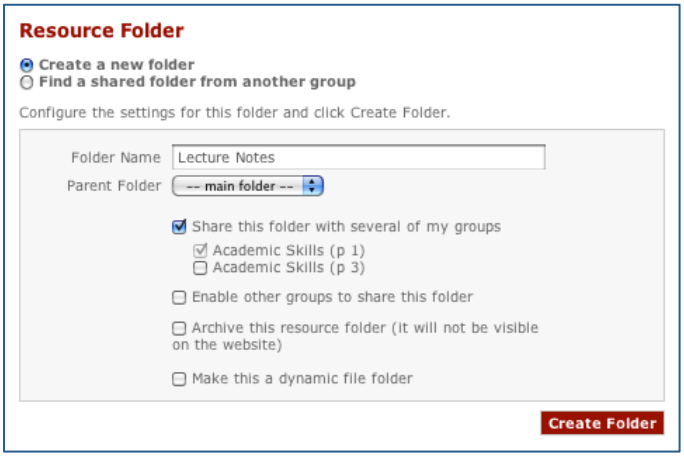
1.9. **Content (optional)**
See 1.6: Content (optional)

2. **Calendar**
The Calendar tab displays upcoming calendar items for the associated Group. Events and Assignments are listed in order; each entry is a link to a detailed view of that specific calendar item. Assignments with associated DropBoxes also display a direct link to the DropBox itself.

From the Calendar tab, users can use the navigation buttons to control the date range of events that is displayed. On the right hand side, icons allow users to configure Alerts, display the Calendar Grid View, export Calendar items, and view the Calendar Help content. Admin users will also see a blue pencil icon, which can be clicked to edit the Calendar properties.



3. **Resources**


Resource Folder
Create a new folder
Find a shared folder from another group
Configure the settings for this folder and click Create Folder.
Folder Name
Lecture Notes
Parent Folder
-- main folder --
Share this folder with several of my groups
Academic Skills (p 1)
Academic Skills (p 3)
Enable other groups to share this folder
Archive this resource folder (it will not be visible on the website)
Make this a dynamic file folder
Create Folder

The Resources tab is where Group Admins can store documents and files they wish to share with Group Members. Resources must be sorted into folders. Admins can create as many folders as they wish in order to organize resource files using the "new folder" button. Once at least one folder has been created, resources can be created with the "new resource" button. (To delete a resource folder, hover over the folder name and click the "Delete" link.)

Users who are Administrators of more than one Group can share Resource folders among any or all of their Groups. When creating a new folder, Admins have the option to share it with any other group to which they have administrative privileges, or with all Groups. Admins can also add a folder that has been created in another Group and shared by clicking "new folder" and selecting "Find a shared folder from another group."

Resources can be files from the user's computer, files from File Manager, site pages, external webpages, dynamic file folders, or custom content that is

entered when the resource is created.

Individual resources, and entire resource folders, can be archived when no longer needed. Archived resources can still be shared among other classes.

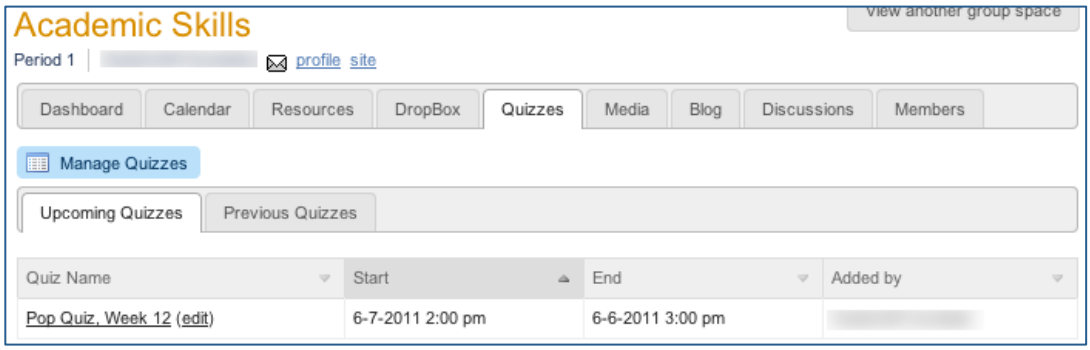
4. **DropBox**

The DropBox tab collates any upcoming Calendar Assignments that have associated DropBoxes. Group members can visit the DropBox tab to submit documents to a DropBox rather than finding the associated Calendar event on an event list.

The DropBox tab will not be visible to Group Members if there are no upcoming assignments. Also, Parents will never be able to view Dropboxes.

Tabs within the DropBox display allow Admins to view both upcoming DropBoxes and past DropBoxes. A new DropBox (that is, a new Calendar Assignment) can be created by clicking the "new DropBox" button. Admins can use the icons associated with each individual DropBox to download all submitted documents, edit the assignment, or delete the DropBox and all of its contents.

5. **Quizzes**



The Quizzes tab allows Group Admins to create forms-based quizzes for Group members. Quiz questions can be formatted as:

- Multiple-choice (single answer)
- Multiple-choice (multiple answers)
- Short answer
- Long answer

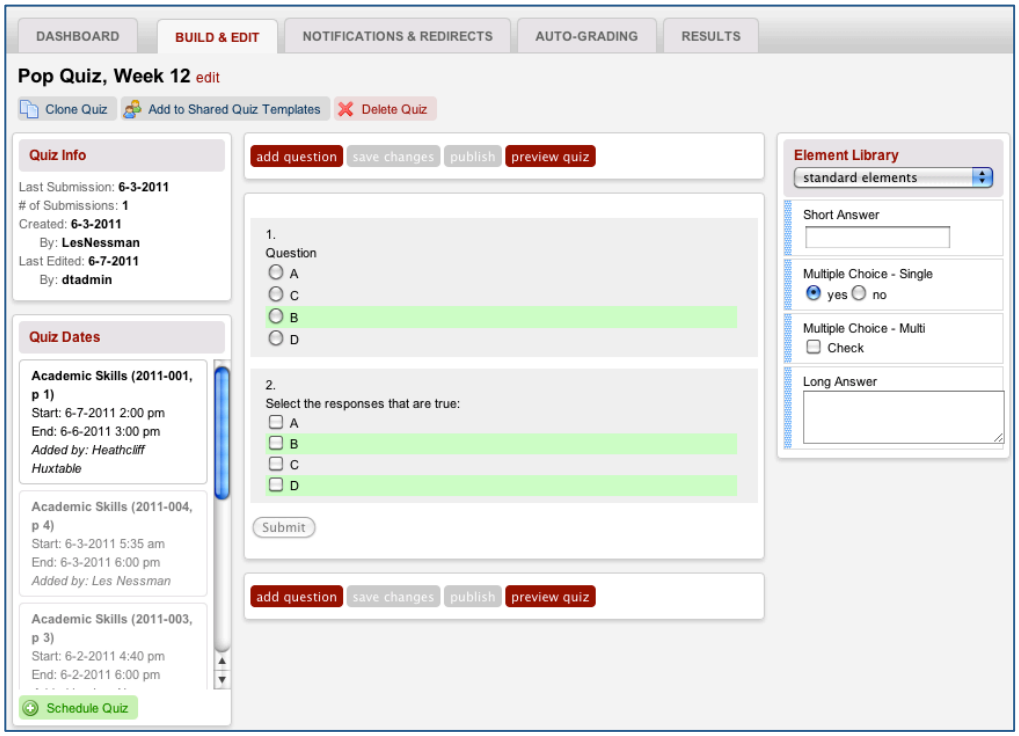
In multiple-choice formats, teachers specify which selections are correct answers. For Short answer and Long answer questions, teachers specify a list of keywords or phrases that correct answers must contain; any responses that include one or more of the listed keywords/phrases will be marked as correct.

In this way, quizzes are self-grading and entirely automated. If a teacher wants or needs to grade quizzes manually, automatic grading can be turned off and grades can be entered by hand for each quiz submission.

Once a quiz has been created, it can be saved as a Shared Quiz Template. Other Group Admins can use templates in their own classes. A quiz can also be cloned and edited to save time on composing new quiz formats.

After creating a quiz, use the "Schedule Quiz" button to set a date for the quiz. Upcoming quizzes will be listed on the "Quizzes" tab on the Group Space.

The quiz-building process is based on the process for creating forms in Forms Manager. As with Forms Manager, Admins can view the results for each quiz.



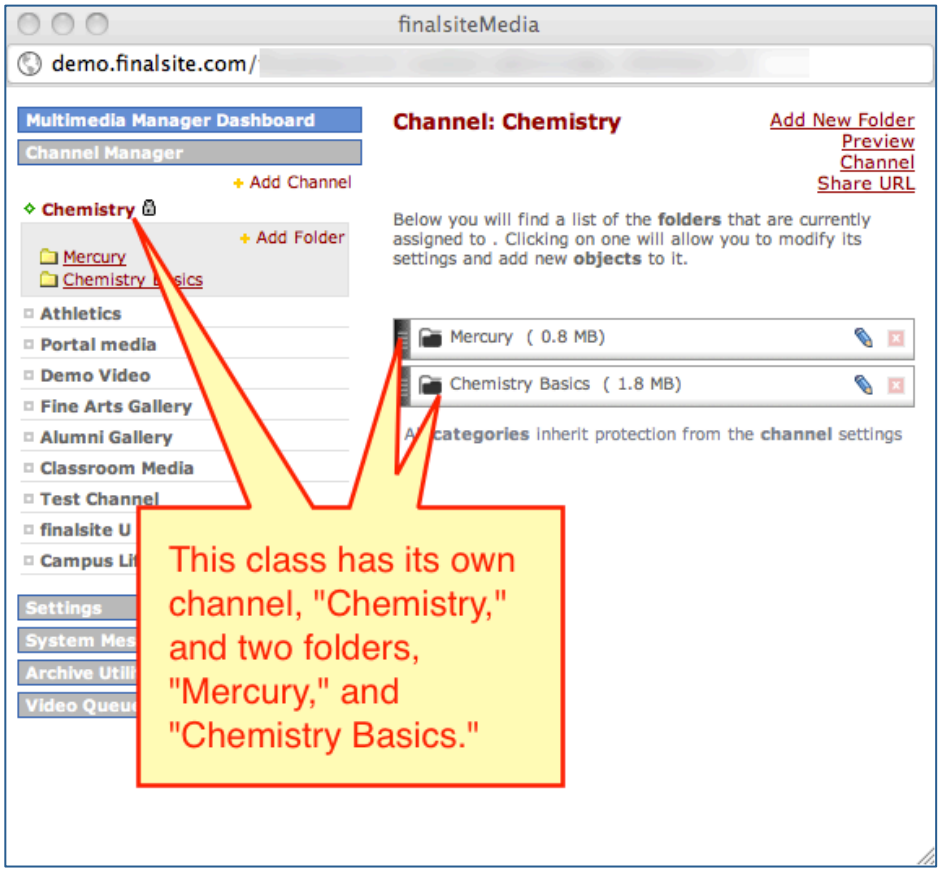
Group members will see the Quizzes tab when an Admin creates a quiz; if no quizzes have been created, the tab will not be visible. Parents never see Quiz content.

6. **Media**
   Group Admins can use the Media tab to share content from Multimedia Manager with the group.

   The Media tab will also appear in the Group Space whenever a Group Admin configures the Media element on the Dashboard. The Media tab will mirror the content of the Dashboard element; unlike the Dashboard element, the Media tab will present the full Media Player.

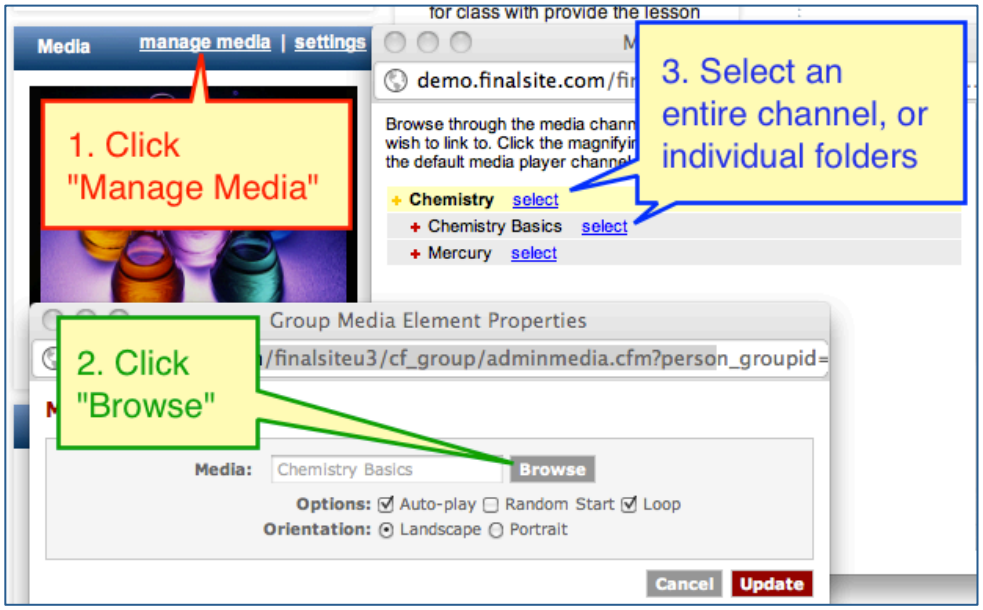
   When the Dashboard Media Element is configured, the Media tab will present the same content with more playback options. Users will be able to navigate around the current Media Channel and view other content saved there. If the Channel properties are set to allow it, users will be able to share and download media from Multimedia Manager, as well.

   Admins can edit content in Multimedia Manager by clicking the “Manage Media” button. This will pop open a Multimedia Manager window, where audio, video and image files can be uploaded to the class’ channel and folders.



Any content uploaded to the appropriate folder will be automatically included in the Media Tab and on the Media Element on the Dashboard.

Use the “settings” link on the Media Dashboard Element to identify which folder in Multimedia Manager will be used to store the class’ content.

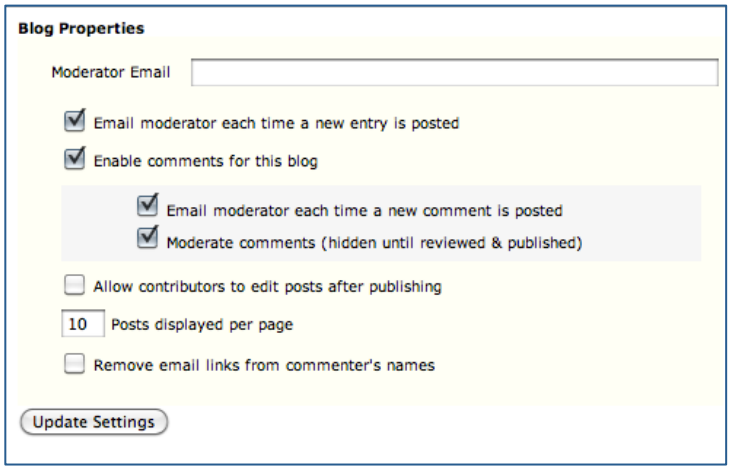


7. **Blog**

The blog tab will appear to group members – students - when teachers activate the group's blog by configuring moderation and editing options, or by posting a first blog entry.

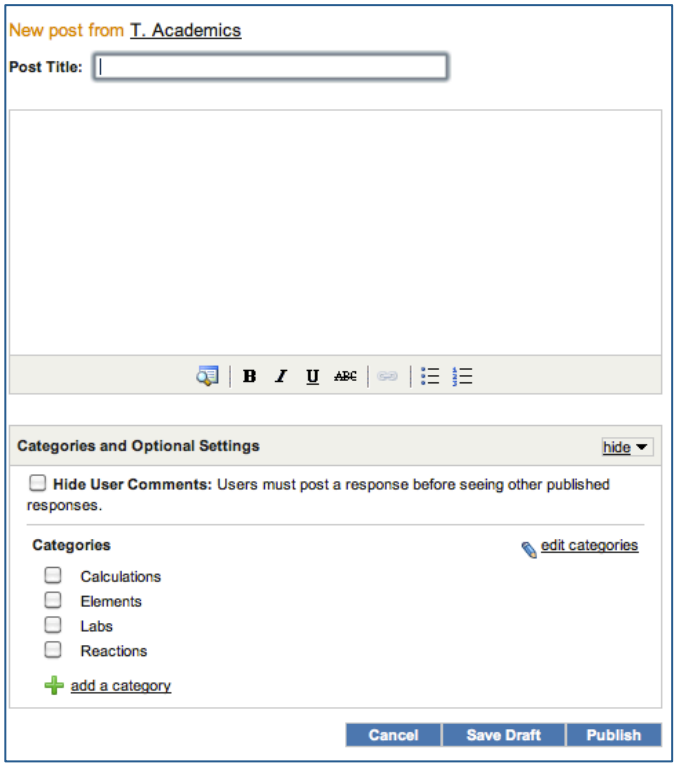
Topics posted by admins will be visible in the Blog tab, and will also appear in the Activity Stream on the Dashboard. Note that Group Members can reply to topics posted by admins, but cannot create their own topics.

You can customize notification and commenting options by clicking the "edit blog settings" link. The Edit Settings window will appear:


Blog Properties
Moderator Email
Email moderator each time a new entry is posted
Enable comments for this blog
Email moderator each time a new comment is posted
Moderate comments (hidden until reviewed & published)
Allow contributors to edit posts after publishing
10
Posts displayed per page
Remove email links from commenter's names
Update Settings

In this window, you can set the Moderator Email address; any notifications regarding new posts or replies to posts will be sent here by default; these options can be adjusted with the checkboxes below. Teachers can choose to disable comments entirely, to hide comments until they have been approved, or to allow all comments to automatically post to the blog. Other options include allowing blog contributors to edit their posts after publication, configuring the number of posts displayed on a page, and choosing whether or not to show the email addresses of individual commenters.

Click "+post new topic" to create a new blog post.

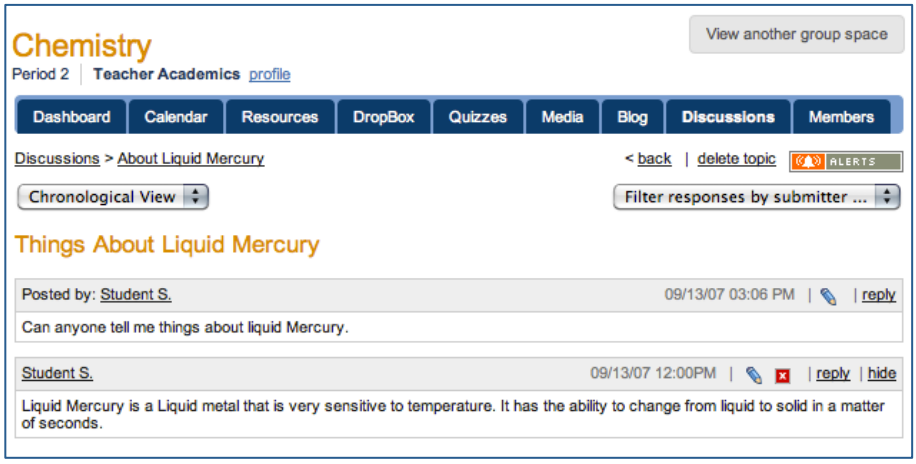


Give your blog post a title, and enter the content in the main text-entry field. You can open the pop-up editor to style the text in your blog entry.

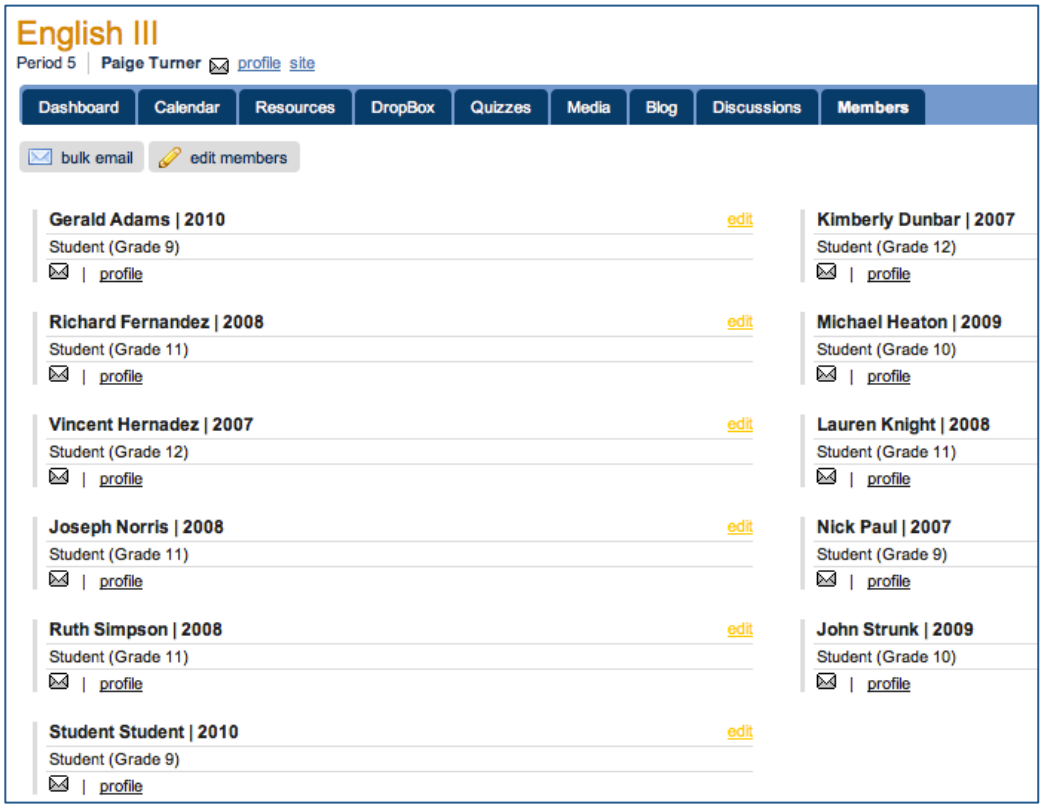
You can prevent readers from seeing comments on the blog post before commenting themselves using the "Hide User Comments" checkbox. Below, use the checkboxes to assign your post to one or more categories.

Parents can see blog posts, but cannot view comments or add their own comments.

8. **Discussions**
In addition to a Group blog, Group Admins can create a discussion board by editing the Discussions tab. Discussions function much like blogs, except that they allow topic creation by Group Members in addition to Group Admins.

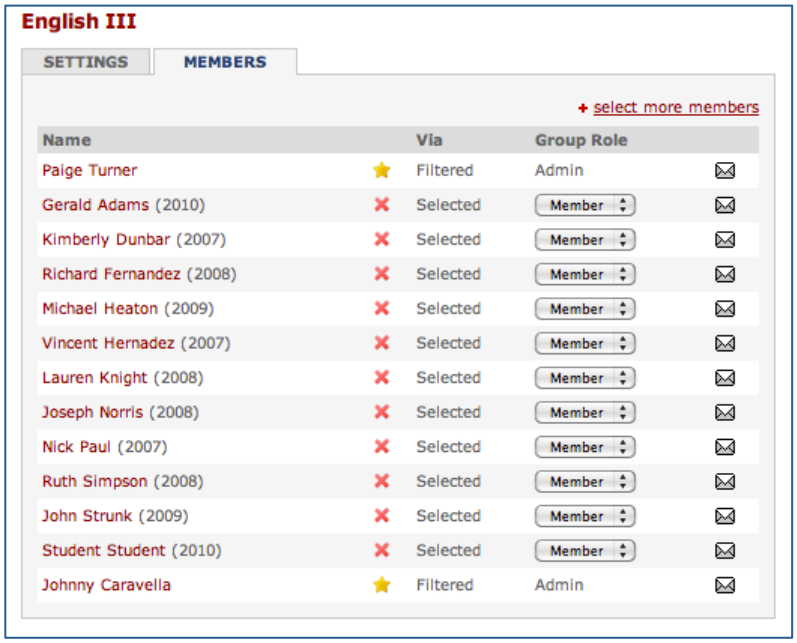

Chemistry
View another group space
Period 2 | Teacher Academics profile
Dashboard
Calendar
Resources
DropBox
Quizzes
Media
Blog
Discussions
Members
Discussions > About Liquid Mercury
< back | delete topic
ALERTS
Chronological View
Filter responses by submitter ...
Things About Liquid Mercury
Posted by: Student S.
09/13/07 03:06 PM | | reply
Can anyone tell me things about liquid Mercury.
Student S.
09/13/07 12:00PM | | reply | hide
Liquid Mercury is a Liquid metal that is very sensitive to temperature. It has the ability to change from liquid to solid in a matter of seconds.

9. **Members**
The Members tab allows Group Admins to view all members of the group, and edit the group membership. Admins can also email group members individually or collectively, and can click on the "profile" links for each member to view selected data from their Constituent Manager profile (publicly available data generally includes Name, Family Relationships, Contact info, and Academic Group membership).



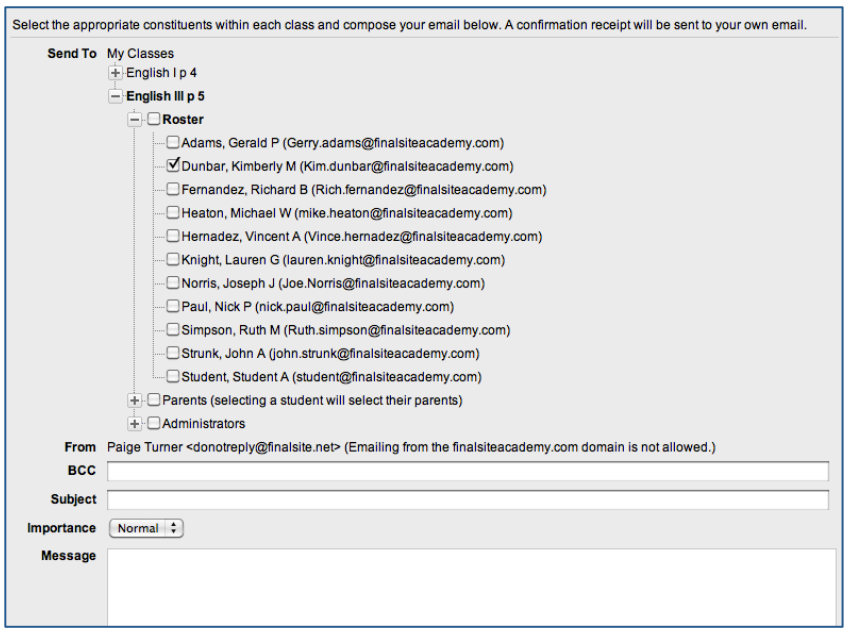
On the Members tab, Group Admins can see all of the members of the group and associated information, including class year and role.

Click the “Edit Members” button to pop open Group Manager, where you can add and remove students to/from the class.

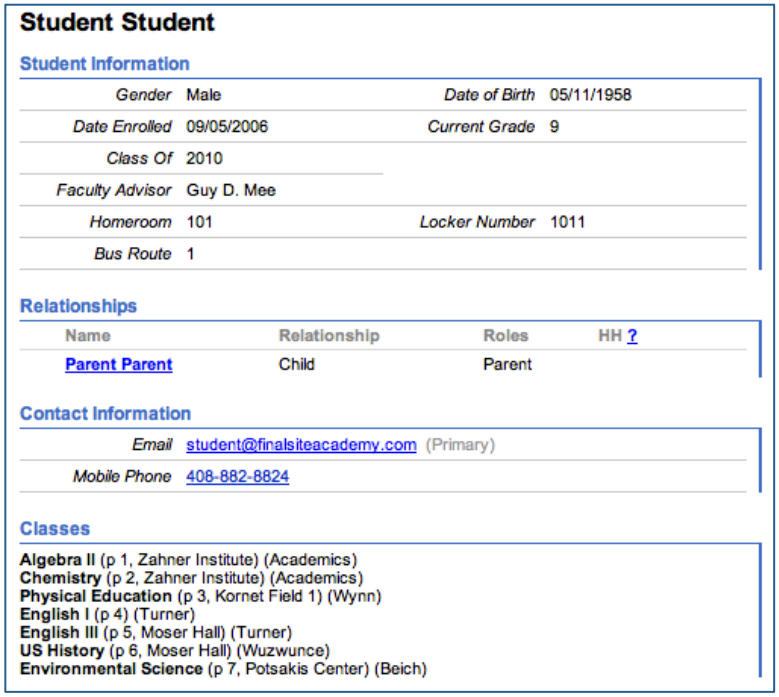


You can also open the Compose Email window by pressing the "bulk email" button directly on the Members tab. This will create a new message; teachers can choose to email the class members (students), administrators for the class group, and/or Parents of class members.

Each student profile listing also has an email button that can be used to send a message directly to that individual student. From the Compose Email window, teachers can select other students in the class, and students in other academic classes that they teach.


Select the appropriate constituents within each class and compose your email below. A confirmation receipt will be sent to your own email.
Send To My Classes
English I p 4
English III p 5
Roster
Adams, Gerald P (Gerry.adams@finalsiteacademy.com)
Dunbar, Kimberly M (Kim.dunbar@finalsiteacademy.com)
Fernandez, Richard B (Rich.fernandez@finalsiteacademy.com)
Heaton, Michael W (mike.heaton@finalsiteacademy.com)
Hernadez, Vincent A (Vince.hernadez@finalsiteacademy.com)
Knight, Lauren G (lauren.knight@finalsiteacademy.com)
Norris, Joseph J (Joe.Norris@finalsiteacademy.com)
Paul, Nick P (nick.paul@finalsiteacademy.com)
Simpson, Ruth M (Ruth.simpson@finalsiteacademy.com)
Strunk, John A (john.strunk@finalsiteacademy.com)
Student, Student A (student@finalsiteacademy.com)
Parents (selecting a student will select their parents)
Administrators
From Paige Turner <donotreply@finalsite.net> (Emailing from the finalsiteacademy.com domain is not allowed.)
BCC
Subject
Importance Normal
Message

Group admins can also click the "profile" link next to each student's name to pop open that student's profile, displaying biographical information, relationships with other constituents, contact information, and the classes and groups in which the student is enrolled.



Student Student

Student Information

Gender	Male	*Date of Birth*	05/11/1958
Date Enrolled	09/05/2006	*Current Grade*	9
Class Of	2010		
Faculty Advisor	Guy D. Mee		
Homeroom	101	*Locker Number*	1011
Bus Route	1		

Relationships

Name	Relationship	Roles	HH ?
Parent Parent	Child	Parent	

Contact Information

Email	student@finalsiteacademy.com (Primary)
Mobile Phone	408-882-8824

Classes

Algebra II (p 1, Zahner Institute) (Academics)
Chemistry (p 2, Zahner Institute) (Academics)
Physical Education (p 3, Kornet Field 1) (Wynn)
English I (p 4) (Turner)
English III (p 5, Moser Hall) (Turner)
US History (p 6, Moser Hall) (Wuzwunce)
Environmental Science (p 7, Potsakis Center) (Beich)